

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY**

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June 5, 2007

Mr. Ron Kosinski, Deputy District Director  
Division of Environmental Planning (I-5 HOV/Truck Lanes Project)  
California Department of Transportation, District 7  
100 S. Main Street, Suite 100-Mail Stop 16A  
Los Angeles, California 90012

**I-5 HOV/Truck Lanes Project  
EIR/EIS Scoping Comments**

Dear Mr. Kosinski:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) respectfully submits the following scoping comments on the proposed Interstate 5 widening between State Route 14 and Ridge Route Road. The Conservancy's primary concern is that the proposed project, and its Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) alternatives, could result in significant adverse impacts to wildlife movement across I5.

The specific areas of concern are the existing under-crossings at Castaic Creek, Calgrove Boulevard, and The Old Road. The over-crossing of concern is at Weldon Canyon. Each of these crossing structures currently provides the opportunity for wildlife to cross the Interstate. The net effect of any approved project that affects any one of these crossing structures should be no loss, and preferably gain, of cross-highway animal movement potential.

Such a level of mitigation may be difficult to achieve at each location, with the exception of Castaic Creek, because of existing crossing-structure constraints. For example the width to length ratio of the Weldon Overpass is such that a longer bridge (with no widening) would substantially reduce its function as a wildlife crossing structure. Greater freeway deck and bridge abutment widths at the Old Road and Calgrove Boulevard could significantly reduce their capacity too. The other constraint is the condition of the approach areas on each opening of each crossing structure. Those conditions could be adversely effected by development on private land that abuts the State-owned rights-of-ways. The EIR/EIS must address each of the above factors to adequately disclose how the proposed project and its alternatives could have a permanent adverse impact on the ability of wildlife to move between the Santa Susana and San Gabriel mountains, and in the case of Castaic Creek, between the Sierra Pelona and Sierra Madre ranges.

Caltrans I5 HOV Truck Lanes Scoping Comments

June 5, 2007

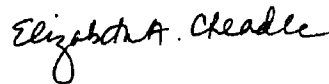
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It may be that the only way to adequately mitigate impacts to a crossing structure is to create new or complementary structures. The crest area of the Newhall Pass presents an excellent opportunity for a new overpass because The Old Road is closely appressed to the Caltrans rights-of-way. A new wildlife overpass that bridges all human infrastructure in this location is the appropriate action for the State to take. If any property acquisition were necessary on the west side of I5 (south of where the bridge abutment would be located) the Conservancy could potentially help fund those acquisitions in the Los Angeles River watershed. Such a bridge could potentially also function as a crossing for the Rim of the Valley Trail.

This is the perfect time in the planning process to put forth regionally significant mitigation measures that can be efficiently integrated into a large infrastructure project.

Please address any future documentation to Paul Edelman of our staff at the above address and by phone at (310) 589-3200 ext. 128.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth A. Cheadle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "E".

ELIZABETH A. CHEADLE  
Chairperson